

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2714

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SHUM, UY, US

SUBJECT: COHA STATEMENT

REF: STATE 290117

1. REFTEL, TRANSMITTING FULL TEXT OF STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE COUNCIL ON HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS NOVEMBER 19, APPRECIATED. EMBASSY HAD NOT PREVIOUSLY SEEN COMPLETE TEXT. FOLLOWING ARE OUR COMMENTS ON BIRNS' CHARGES.

2. COHA, (QUOTING WILSON FERREIRA): "EMBASSY... HAS ACTED AS PUBLIC RELATIONS AGENT FOR THE URUGUAYAN GOVERNMENT." COMMENT: AS ANY REVIEW OF THIS EMBASSY'S REPORTING WOULD SHOW, THE EMBASSY HAS DONE EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO GIVE THE DEPARTMENT A FAIR, FACTUAL AND UNBIASED PICTURE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN URUGUAY. WHILE WE HAVE NOT AGREED WITH MANY OF THE ACCUSATIONS MADE AGAINST URUGUAY, ESPECIALLY REGARDING TORTURE OF PRISONERS AND THE NUMBER OF PRISONERS, WE HAD NONETHELESS FRANKLY REPORTED THOSE PRACTICES WHICH WE CONSIDERED INCONSISTENT WITH ACCEPTED STANDARDS FOR HUMANE TREATMENT OF PRISONERS. CONSISTENT WITH THE POLICY OF "QUIET DIPLOMACY", THE ONLY PUBLIC STATEMENT EVER MADE HERE ON THE SUBJECT WAS THE AMBASSADOR'S RESPONSE TO PRESS QUERIES RE THE KOCH AMENDMENT ON OCTOBER 18.

3. COHA: "SIRACUSA DEPRECATES THE U.S. CONGRESS AND ITS EFFORTS
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TO LINK UP THE GRANTING OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND WHAT HAPPENS

TO THAT ASSISTANCE ONCE IT ARRIVES IN THE RECIPIENT NATION." COMMENT: THIS APPEARS TO BE BASED ON AN EMBROIDERED OR DISTORTED VERSION OF THE AMABSSADOR'S COMMENTS IN A PRESS INTERVIEW ON OCTOBER 18 (MVD 3956, 3973). AS REPORTED PREVIOUSLY, MILITARY ASSISTANCE AS SUCH WAS NOT MENTIONED IN THE INTERVIEW. WE MIGHT ADD THAT, AT AMBASSADOR'S DIRECTION, THE EMBASSY HAS ADOPTED A POLICY OF THE STRICTIEST POSSIBLE COMPLIANCE WITH BOT THE LETTER AND SPIRIT OF THE KOCH AMENDMENT.

4. COHA: "RATHER THAN USE THE INFLUENCE OF HIS OFFICE TO ATTEMPT TO EDUCATE THE URUGUAYAN GOVERNMENT TO RELENT IN ITS PERSECUTION OF ITS OWN PEOPLE, SIRACUSA...." COMMENT: THE DEPARTMENT'S FILES MAKE AMPLY CLEAR THIS MISSION'S EFFORTS WITH THE GOU WITH RESPECT TO HUMAN RIGHTS. IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT SUCH EFFORTS BEGAN AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT IN DECEMBER 1973 AND HAVE CONTINUED EVER SINCE.

5. COHA: "SIRACUSA GOES ON TO SAY THAT THE REASON WHY CONGRESS VOTED TO CUT OFF AID TO URUGUAY WAS BECAUSE 'PROBABLY EVERYTHING WAS DUE TO SOME KIND OF LACK OF COMMUNICATION'" QG COMMENT: MVD 3973 INFORMED THE DEPARTMENT AS TO THE CORRECT PHRASING OF THE AMBASSADOR'S COMMENTS.

6. COHA: "AMBASSADOR SIRACUSA RESPONDED TO A QUESTION AS TO WHEN MILITARY AID WOULD B RESUMED.." BY PROMISING TO "DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO MAKE IT HAPPEN." COMMENT: AS NOTED ABOVE, MILITARY AID WAS NOT MENTIONED IN THE INTERVIEW AND THE AMBASSADOR, AS REPORTED IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER, WAS MISQUOTED BY REPORTERS NOT PRESENT AT THE INTERVIEW.

7. COHA: "...SIRACUSA EXCEEDED HIS INSTRUCTIONS AND HAD NOT BEEN AUTHORIZED TO MAKE THESE STATEMENTS.." COMMENT: AS THE RECORD SHOWS, THE AMBASSADOR'S COMMENT WITH RESPECT TO THE KOCH AMENDMENT WAS A STATEMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT'S POSITION AS EXPRESSED IN OPEN HEARING ON THE PROPOSAL. (SEE MVD 3956).

8. COHA: "THE URUGUAYAN GOVERNMENT...WOULD NO LONGER PERMIT URUGUAYAN CITIZENS TO DIRECTLY PRESENT PETITIONS TO THE OAS COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS." COMMENT: THE EMBASSY IS NOT AWRE OF ANY SUCH STEP. WE ARE CHECKING AND WILL REPORT.
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9. COHA: "THE URUGUAYAN GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED THE FORMATION OF A SPECIAL COURT WHICH WOULD PERMIT THE PRESIDING JUDGE OF SUMMARILY DETAIN ANY CITIZEN WITHOUT ANY CHARGES WHATSOEVER..." COMMENT: WE ASSUME THIS IS A REFERENCE TO THE 'STATE OF DANGER' BILL NOW BEFORE THE LEGISLATURE (MVD 4087). AS REPORTED, THE REACTION TO THIS LEGISLATION HAS BEEN MIXED. HOWEVER, THE APPARENT AND ANNOUNCED INTENT IS TO RESTORE DUE PROCESS IN MOST SECURITY CASES,

INCLUDING PROMPT ACCESS TO ATTORNEYS AND TRIAL BEFORE CIVILIAN JUDGES. IF IT DOES SO, IT WILL BE A CLEAR IMPROVEMENT. IT MUST BE NOTED THAT NO COURT HAS BEEN FORMED AND THAT THE BILL IS STILL IN COMMITTEE.

10. COHA: "...IMMEDIATELY AFTER CONGRESS VOTED TO CUT OFF MILITARY AID LAST SEPTEMBER 15, THE URUGUAYAN AUTHORITIES ARRESTED 150 INDIVIDUALS ON POLITICAL CHARGES. OF THESE 64 WERE DETAINED AFTER HE (THE AMBASSADOR) HAD MADE HIS STATEMENTS TO THE URUGUAYAN PRESS." COMMENT: HAD 150 PERSONS BEEN ARRESTED, THE EMBASSY, IN ALL PROBABILITY, WOULD HAVE HEARD ABOUT IT. WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT OCCURRED. AS REPORTED IN MVD 4136, 4143 AND 4161, THE GOU ANNOUNCED ON OCTOBER 28 THE CAPTURE OF 62 SUBVERSIVES. THESE PEOPLE WERE PICKED UP OVER A PERIOD OF MONTHS IN A PROCESS WHICH CULMINATED, ACCORDING TO THE GOU REPORT, WITH THE ARREST OF 14 TERRORISTS ON OCTOBER 23. THUS, NEITHER OF COHA'S STATEMENTS, RE EITHER 150 OR 64 ARRESTS, IS CORRECT; NOR IS, THEREFORE, ITS STATEMENT "AS SIRACUSA WELL KNEW", CONCERNING THESE STATEMENTS.

SIRACUSA

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